

Community Woodlands Association



CWA E-NEWSLETTER - ISSUE 33

Welcome to the Autumn/Winter 2021 edition of CWA e-newsletter. Thank you to everyone who contributed news and stories to this issue. We hope these articles will inspire and motivate, and give you the opportunity to catch up on what other CWA members have been up to over the past few months.



Image: Alan O'Brien (Aulnaskiach Dell)

Keep up to date with CWA:

Like us on Find us on



Facebook

Flickr

Follow us on Watch us on



Twitter

YouTube

Contents

Page

Opportunities to join the CWA Board	2
CWA Conference 2021	2
Forest School in Aulnaskiach Dell: A Snapshot	3
Argyll & the Isles Coast & Countryside Trust: Climate Beacon for COP26	4
Cormonachan Community Woodlands	5
Eco-tourism at Glengarry Community Woodlands: Converting community-owned timber into a community-run enterprise	6
Dingwall Community Woodland	8
Aigas Community Forest	9
Comrie Community Woodland: Our journey to woodland creation	11
Insh Community Holdings ... our story so far	13
Applecross Community Company: Torgarve Community Woodlands	14
Kippin Community Woodland Group	15
Newtonhill Croft -Trees versus Covid: One Woodland's Story	16

The work of the Community Woodlands Association is supported by Scottish Forestry



Scottish Forestry
Coilltearachd na h-Alba



Opportunities to join the CWA Board

This is an exciting time in Scottish and World Forestry, with an increasing recognition of the important (if not vital) contribution trees and woodland can make, particularly with a strong connection to “people”. The CWA has a key role in promoting and representing the voice of community forestry, providing opportunities for skills development, knowledge exchange and offering a respected source of advice and support.

We are fortunate in having a very able, effective and respected group of officers, but there is also the important role of our Board of Directors. The Non-Executive Directors work closely with our chief executive and agree the strategic direction of the CWA and ensure we have robust and effective governance in place – providing scrutiny and constructive challenge. Over the next 12 months there will be a requirement for a number of the current Directors to step down as they complete their terms of office. This provides an opportunity for new Directors to come forward. Directors can be nominated by a member group or co-opted as an individual member.

I have served as Director and Chair of the CWA and found these roles both rewarding and very interesting. The strength of a Board comes from its diversity of Director background, the balance of the necessary skill sets within the Directors and of course a belief in the purpose of the organisation. I would encourage you to consider taking on this role. I have not found it demanding in time terms – even before the Pandemic most of our Board meetings were held remotely. There is a friendly and positive atmosphere within the Board and a good relationship with our staff. As a Director you would have the opportunity to influence and determine the direction and priorities of the CWA and link into a wide range of emerging and current initiatives and projects and where you wish take on representational roles on behalf of the CWA.

I would encourage you to talk to either Jon Hollingdale (our CEO) or myself (Ian Ross) if you have any questions about the Director role or the CWA in general – we can be contacted via Jon’s email jon@communitywoods.org and office number 01309 674004.

Ian Ross

CWA Conference 2021

The 22nd Annual CWA Conference was held on 1st & 2nd October 2021 at the Carrbridge Hotel and on Zoom.

The conference attracted 75 bookings, representing 36 community groups and 12 other organisations plus individual members and academic researchers. The full conference report is available from the [CWA website](#).

On the first day of the conference there were site visits hosted by the Anagach Woods Trust, Rothiemurchus Estate, Strathnairn Community Woodlands & Laggan Forest Trust.

Day 2 was held on Zoom with two workshop sessions (click links for recordings): [Community Engagement](#) and [Tackling the Climate Emergency](#).

There were also four breakout sessions: [Rewilding](#); [Marketing Forest Products](#); [Tree Safety](#); and [Making Tourism Work For Communities](#); followed by the CWA AGM.





Forest School in Aulnaskiach Dell:

A Snapshot

There is a palpable air of excitement as the primary six class from the local school wind their way along the narrow path beside the burn towards 'the camp'. Since leaving the busy road they have been taking in the unfamiliar sights, sounds and smells of this small urban woodland: tall, craggy elms covered in ivy stand like giants beside the path, newly planted cherry trees wave their branches in the wind and head-high nettles and brambles tumble over piles of branches, the result of last year's tree fellings. On the other side of the burn stands a great beech wood interspersed with holly: these beech trees have been here since the nineteenth century and some of the trunks are marked with the initials of people long gone.

We soon arrive at a clearing at the far end of the path and the children settle like starlings on a few large logs neatly arranged in a quadrangle. For the next couple of hours they will be participating in their first experience of 'Forest School'. For readers unfamiliar with this concept the [Forest School Association](#) provide children with regular sessions of outdoor play and holistic learning. They encourage hands-on exploration as a way of developing resilience, confidence, and increased self esteem in children.

After a brief introduction to the wood, its lay out, its history and a few simple rules, the head-teacher explains the first challenge of the day, 'Crossing the Burn'. To my utter astonishment three quarters of this group of urban ten year old's confess to never having crossed a burn before in their lives! To their impressionable minds we might as well be discussing a crossing of the Amazon rather than the three meter wide stretch of water that meanders through the Aulnaskiach woods. Moments later we are all perched on one bank with another teacher ready to supervise from the far bank as each child is initiated in turn into the mysteries of burn crossing. There are cheers as each one makes it across and encouragement for the odd

stumblers, especially if water has got into wellies! Safely on the far bank, first skill mastered, the head teacher explains that they are free to go off and explore for half an hour, that they are to return for hot chocolate and biscuits at the allotted time and that we will all meet again at 'the camp'.



Children explode like stars shooting off in all directions. The five adult helpers position themselves discreetly throughout the wood (just to keep an eye-out). A small gaggle of three children dash up a slope and instantly get stuck in holly bushes. Holly hurts, ouch, second lesson. I watch them break free deciding that for now they will explore the old Victorian paths weaving across the steep-sided slopes. The wood comes to life with the sound of children chattering and exclaiming at the novelty of being able to explore their environment unfettered. And again to my surprise, in response to the sound of a whistle half an hour later almost all the children have found their way back to camp and are ready for hot chocolate and stories. One boy explains how he was able to find his way back by using the stream as a guide. The few stragglers are swept up by the adult helpers.

Over the next six weeks the children became familiar with the wood and all its ways. Each week they gained new skills: the rapid growth in their confidence and understanding of environment and improved physical self-confidence was wonderful.



They learned how to weave willow baskets, made imprints from clay, listened to birdsong, got to know some of the names for trees and animals, and how to look after the environment by clearing up litter.



But above all their real need was to play and explore. Their teachers reported improved behaviour in the classroom, better co-operation in the group and an increased ability to tackle new challenges.

In these covid times it has not been possible to continue this programme and sadly the inspirational Forest School head teacher has moved on. However we do have plans for connecting with another primary school in our area. And as soon as visitors are allowed in again we will be starting our next project...to build bird boxes in the wood with a couple of classes. Maybe children are already visiting your woods, but if not, there are no better seeds to sow for the future than to invite them in!

Gina O'Brien. Images by Alan O'Brien



Argyll & the Isles Coast & Countryside Trust: Climate Beacon for COP26

Argyll & the Isles Coast & Countryside Trust (ACT) was selected as one of seven Climate Beacons across Scotland in the run-up to and beyond the COP26 UN Climate Change Conference. Climate Beacons is a Scotland wide collaborative project between climate change or environmental organisations and arts, heritage or cultural organisations.

ACT is working with Cove Park, an international artists residency centre in Cove, to stimulate long-term public engagement in climate change challenges facing communities. The aim is to help everyone understand how climate change will affect them personally and what they can do to reduce it. ACT's activities are focusing especially on raising awareness of Argyll's unique Rainforests.

Julie Young, ACT's Development Manager says, "The Argyll Climate Beacon will involve workshops, Climate Cafes, Rainforest field trips, artists residencies and production of a film. We're looking forward to integrating these with many of ACT's existing projects, including Saving Argyll's

Rainforest, MAKI Pups, Branching Out and of course our ACT Now project, also focusing on community responses to climate change. We're particularly looking forward to planting a new area of native forest at the Cove Park site. There's so much potential for this partnership to continue beyond COP26, and great to have new artistic input to our activities".



Image: Recreational trails through Atlantic rainforest - Barnluasgan, Knapdale Forest, near Lochgilphead (photo credit: Stan Phillips)



Cormonachan Community Woodlands

Cormonachan Community Woodlands has had a busy year with the conservation of their Ancient Semi-natural Woodlands between Lochgoilhead and Carrick Castle. The charity received grants over two years from the National Park to clear all the *Rhododendron ponticum* from the woodlands to be completed by 2022. It has a felling licence from Scottish Forestry to clear more non-native Sitka spruce from around oaks and to replant with native trees. This work is being done by 10 volunteers from the Fife Conservation Group who have been doing this work 2 weekends a year for about 20 years. Over the last 18 months, 625 native trees have been planted by local volunteers.

In November, fourteen Raleigh International volunteers cleared bracken and scrub from around the recently planted trees and removed debris of branches and logs from the new 2 km path route. This path will eventually connect the 2.5 km of existing paths from the Contemplation Shelter to the Medieval Settlement and Cormonachan Falls at Upper Cormonachan with a second car park, once

we have the funding in place. Applications of quarter of a million pounds have been made to two funders to share the construction costs with decisions to be made by December 2021.

Throughout October, Cormonachan Woodlands has hosted 'The Woodlands Art Trail - 2021' organised by Argyll Arts Collective where several local Argyll artists displayed their thirty sculptures and art works around the paths. 1,415 visitors attended this free event in October.

On 7th November, a visit by the Association Jiboiana, the indigenous Amazonian delegation that attended COP26 in Glasgow visited Cormonachan Woodlands to bless this Scottish Rainforest and planted an oak tree in commemoration of their visit. This was followed up by a community event in the Lochgoilhead village hall where 100 invited guests were able to meet them and there were speeches and musical performances by this Amazonian group.

Douglas Locke



Image: Indigenous people from the Amazon Rainforest perform a sacred blessing ritual to a Scottish rainforest, Cormonachan Community Woodlands in Argyll, Scotland. (The Alliance for Scotland's Rainforest. 07/11/2021 Val Munduruku, Thaline Karaja, Sia Huni Kuin, Busa Huni Kuin, Narrubia Werreria ©Duncan McGlynn)



Eco-tourism at Glengarry Community Woodlands: Converting community-owned timber into a community-run enterprise

Glengarry Community Woodlands was established in 2016 after the community purchased a 31ha forest with an old FCS Depot building through the NFLS. After the transfer, the community faced the challenge of how to develop an enterprise at the site so the forest would again contribute to the social fabric of the community by becoming a reliable local employer, as well as generating income to support its continued development. An eco-tourism enterprise was identified early-on as the most suitable vehicle for delivery of this longer-term economic and social outcome because of its ability to sit neatly within a multi-purpose management of the woodland.

After 18 months of planning and design work, in April 2021 planning permission was awarded for the construction of 8 wooden off-grid cabins. The cabins will be located 5-10 minutes walk into the forest, providing holiday accommodation to guests who will also have access to a new 'amenity' building with showers, a fully equipped kitchen, a lounge as well as other storage, outside washing-up, and recreational facilities. To create an environment that we could market as an authentic forest retreat (as well as accommodating site-constraints), no guest vehicles will be allowed into the cabin area; cars will be left at the amenity building and guests will walk up to the cabin site deep in the forest.

The forest contains a range of very high quality commercially grown timber, including some excellent Japanese larch planted in the early 1950s which was scheduled to be thinned. We have always wanted to incorporate our own timber into the new buildings, and our designer and main contractor Bernard Planterose (North Woods Construction) helped us to achieve this by providing a cutting list for timber that we can supply ourselves. This has generally been timber for most outside applications where we can achieve the required moisture content by air drying.

Selective felling based on sawlogs of suitable diameter took place over a week in early November. Fortunately, our larch is slow grown so there's minimal sapwood which is ideal for producing quality sawn timber. After the felling, logs were processed into lengths in preparation for extraction.



Larch was extracted using a high-lead pulley system

The rocky and steep site presents challenges for modern conventional methods of timber extraction – the forest floor is steep, and is strewn with glacial boulders. A contractor was brought in who has a high-lead cable-way system commonly used by the FC up until the early 1980s. The machinery had recently been entirely re-conditioned and consists of a Nuffield 255 with Igland 4t double drum winch capable of running skyline and high-lead extraction systems. The pulley system has an optimal extraction length of up to 200metres and allows for widely spaced racks. Logs are lifted partly off the ground, and then part skidded down to the tractor causing minimal ground disturbance.

Timber can be stacked using this method to a point at which a forest tractor with timber trailer and crane can forward it to a suitable stacking area. The advantage of this system over modern forwarders is the machine will sit on existing



infrastructure making it ideal for extraction over inaccessible terrain. Once sorted and stacked by size in the yard, a Wood Mizer LT40 then converts the timber into the cutting list provided by our designer.

As a PAWS site which sits on the Scottish Ancient Woodland Inventory, the removal of these trees has provided us with the opportunity to improve remnant ancient woodland features by thinning sensitively around oak, and improving conditions for other areas of native tree cover. Removing the larch has also presented practical opportunities to re-align the edge boundaries and open areas for the new amenity building and upgraded forest track.

This stage of the project has been funded by local grant funders, but the main part of the cabin construction won't begin until the spring. With the substantial increases in the cost of building materials, the overall cost of the project has risen considerably, (but so has the value of self-milling home grown timber).

GCW has chosen to use Community Shares as a way to raise the capital needed to get the cabins

off the ground. A share offer is currently being prepared, with a view to launching it in the coming months, and hopefully capital will be in place ready to begin construction in the spring, with the business becoming operational before the end of the 2022 tourist season. This will only be an initial phase for the project where 5 cabins will be constructed (depending on the amount raised by the share offer). Another construction phase - raising the total number of cabins to 8 - will follow once the business is operating and more funds can be accessed. Once operational, this business will support the core costs of the organisation, create new jobs for Glengarry, and allow GCW to go on to deliver other developments both in the existing community woodland bought in 2016, and other projects elsewhere in Glengarry.

For further information on the timber extraction contact BlueGreen Conservation
bgconservation@yahoo.co.uk

For further information on the project at Glengarry contact Tom Cooper
tom@glengarry.org.uk

Tom Cooper (Development Officer, GCW)



Stacking the timber properly is important, it'll remain here for about 6 months



Dingwall Community Woodland

A new community woodland is being developed in Dingwall, Highland. The project began late 2020 when Knockbain Farm shared with the community in and around Dingwall a video introducing their idea to transform one of their fields close to the town into a woodland to be used by the community. Along with this video they posted a survey to understand if the community would like this project to go ahead, how they would like to get involved and their ideas for what they would like to see in a community woodland.

Over 100 people responded and 100% of respondents were in favour of the project going ahead. Since then 10 people from the town who were particularly passionate about the project have formed the steering group and have been meeting once-twice a month, working hard to push it forward.

had some great communication with the local primary school and the children have sent lots of drawings of things they would like to see in the woodland.

The plan is for roughly 12 acres of the field to be planted with native broadleaf species and shrubs. We hope to create a pond, to have lots of paths and picnic areas for people to enjoy, and more! Within the next year we hope to have deer fencing erected, access paths into the field and to be ready to start mass planting in the season 2022/23.

Responses from the initial survey made clear the community did not feel in the position to take over ownership of the field or management of the woodland project just yet. For now, ownership remains with Knockbain Farm, with management by both the farm and the community together.



With our woodland currently without any trees, there is a lot of work to do, and we've made a great start! We have really enjoyed chatting with and getting advice from existing community woodlands nearby, like Evanton Wood Community Company and Culduthel Wood Group.

The Community Woodland Association has also been incredible at giving advice and attending some of our meetings to get us started. We've already

As the project develops and the community feels ready, ownership and management will be transferred to the community.

If you would like to have a chat about our project, share some advice or just want to say hello, please get in touch: dingwallcommunitywood@gmail.com

Josie Fraser



Aigas Community Forest

There is a time in the affairs of man, and Community Forests, when ambition and funds allow the upgrade of equipment and facilities. We have progressively acquired an office and built workshops, bought a historic Massey Ferguson 165 Highland Bear forestry tractor and timber trailer and built a tractor shed. Somewhere along the line we bought a John Deere Gator for the volunteers and our tractor shed had an extension. All this I should add was using our own timber milled on site and built by our volunteers. From the early days of owning the forest we had acquired a grant funded wood fuel processor and we were developing that business. We also were developing our paths network.

Obviously those activities would benefit from more equipment so the Board set up a sub committee to look at options and bring a proposal back to them. There were a variety of ideas from rough terrain forklifts to various other manual handling solutions. No single solution fitted easily at an affordable price. A tractor with front loader was the obvious solution but anything new seemed totally outside our price range and anything inside our price range was elderly and potentially very expensive to maintain.



Midnight oil was burned and the internet trawled for options. Not quite an eureka moment but we did find a tractor with front loader that fitted our budget but from the other side of the world. The

Chinese built Lovol 504 Gen III was an option. There was however a well-respected UK distributor. Lovol used to sell their tractors under the Foton brand but that reverted to their truck and bus division. Lovol was to be the brand for tractors. In 2018 Lovol bought the Italian Arbos tractor company and also the Italian Goldoni vineyard tractor company. The Italian technical engineers were set to work developing the Lovol 35-90hp tractors for the European market.



New cabs and technical improvements soon found favour in the Scandinavian and Eastern European countries. Sales in the UK took off but probably not at the same level as our European neighbours.

One truism of tractor purchase is the prime mover is only the start of the journey so the sub committee explored the options and came up the need for a tipper trailer, forks, verge flail mower and front loader grapple as the way forward. The proposal was placed before the Board, approved and orders were placed. The Lovol 504 came in at under £17k with loader and three way bucket plus VAT. Included in that was two years warranty. Unfortunately, recent shipping cost rises will no doubt have inflated that price and delivery was the proverbial slow boat from China aggravated by the Pandemic, the Suez blockage and then the driver shortage. Now we are relieved that all our equipment is here and we can see the benefits. Moving wood fuel from the processor and loading



customers trailers is simple and quick, deliveries with our tipping trailer to the local community are now possible and the verges and regen have succumbed to our new mower. The three way bucket has allowed potholes to be filled and sawdust removed from our milling area. It even works well lifting the occasional branch although large movements will benefit from the grapple. The one addition that we made, on safety grounds, was a hydraulic trailer hitch. Many injuries with tractors are to people trapped

between the tractor and trailer and our auto hitch system means the driver can pick up the trailer without even leaving the cab. Then s/he just needs to connect the tipper hydraulics, the airbrakes and the trailer lights in perfect safety. First rule with any plant on site is safety and with volunteers it is never more so. So now we can develop our wood fuel sales and create our new paths, plus the myriad of other maintenance chores every forest throws up and, we admit, do it in some comfort.

John Graham

Highland Renewal transformed into Tireragan Trust

Over the summer, Highland Renewal, founded in 1995, was converted into Tireragan Trust; a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation. The Trust is responsible for managing 625 hectares of land on the Isle of Mull on behalf of the landowners. The land is situated between Knockvologan and Ardanish on the south west tip of the Ross of Mull and is particularly special for the richness of the biodiversity found between the Celtic rainforest, moorland and marine habitats. The current trustees are all volunteers and come from Mull, Iona, Erraid and the mainland.

The management aims of the trust are to protect and enhance the biodiversity of the land and to

connect people sensitively to the area. So far the trustees have been mainly involved with carrying out surveys of the fauna and flora, and maintenance work on the fence line and trails, but have many questions about deer management, possible peat restoration and other aspects of enhancing the biodiversity. We are also keen to do more around education and outreach. We would love to share our ideas with anyone interested.

If you have any questions or if you are interested in volunteering or becoming a member, then please don't hesitate to contact us via info@tireragantrust.co.uk or visit our [website](#).

Tireragan Trust





Comrie Community Woodland Our journey to woodland creation

In 2006, Comrie Development Trust (CDT) was formed, and in 2007 we were able to purchase Culybraggan Camp and a 46 acre piece of land opposite the camp from the MoD. In 2011, the Comrie community agreed that the site should be planted as a new native woodland. The Comrie Community Woodland (CCW) group, as a volunteer group within CDT, has finally succeeded in this woodland creation and is now a vibrant group proudly achieving environmental and community related outcomes.

The Community Woodland Group commenced Scottish Forestry grant funded work during Summer 2020 on the 46 acre low-lying hill ground. This has supported the creation of a new native broadleaf woodland. Initially a local fencing contractor carried out work on a perimeter deer fence and this was followed by the mounding operation across the site. Finally, the trees were planted, mainly by contractor, during March 2020. The types of trees planted were pedunculate oak, sessile oak, downy birch, willow, common alder, rowan, aspen, hazel and Scots pine. Woodland group volunteers completed final tree planting during April 2021 so that there are now around 20,000 trees planted across the site. The woodland also has unplanted areas to maintain some excellent views and the biodiversity of the unimproved grassland which hosts many species of insects, butterflies and wildflowers including orchids.

Although the group was small during woodland creation planning years, it has grown quickly over the past 2 years and now has around 50 volunteers from Comrie and beyond who regularly take part in work and events to support the woodland. The group has people with a wide range of knowledge and skills and regularly includes children taking part. The group has been working well to make improvements to the

woodland and has benefitted from several additional grants in the past 18 months.

A Perth and Kinross Community Environment Challenge Fund grant allowed the group to create a new bridge over the historic mill lade on site and build a new hardstanding by the main gate to improve access, attend forestry first aid training, and purchase a wide range of tools and equipment to assist group volunteers to maintain the woodland over the coming years.



A small grant from Volunteering Matters/ NatureScot allowed the group to buy new spades and forks to dig some small ponds across the woodland site. There are now several naturally filled ponds attracting wildlife and further enhancing the biodiversity of the area. We hope to extend the number of ponds in the future.



The group was awarded a grant from the local Heinrich Steinmeyer Legacy fund. The most significant project this funded was the woodland shelter, an octagonal timber frame with turf/wildflower roof. During May and June 2021 volunteers completed the construction of this shelter and seeded the roof in September 2021. The grant also funded the purchase of scythes and scything training for volunteers so that they could create and maintain a path network across the site without the use of machinery.

Nine volunteers received this training and along with others already trained to scythe the group have now cut and maintained several kilometres of paths, allowing people to more easily and safely access different parts of the woodland. The path network will be extended in the coming year. This grant is also funding some small stream and wet ground crossings, some discrete path signage, a few picnic benches and other benches, and an interpretation board. These are all due for completion soon.

In September 2021 the first community woodland welcome event was held. Generous donations from two charitable trusts meant that ticket prices could be kept low. The event attracted more than 200 people from Comrie and well beyond and was a huge success with local folk musicians playing throughout the day from the new shelter, forest school activities greatly enjoyed by children and adults, woodland walks led by group volunteers, and great food from local suppliers.

The event also saw the start of the community woodland consultation which will run more widely in the community. We are seeking the views of anyone interested in the community woodland space on their long-term vision for the woodland as well as on activities or developments that they would or would not like to see taking place there. The group looks forward to more events like this in the future.

Volunteers have been the lifeblood of the woodland group. Those with expertise in areas of ecology have been very busy carrying out survey work on birds, butterflies and wildflowers during

2021. Many other groups members have joined these sessions to contribute and learn. These records will assist with tracking biodiversity changes over time.

The woodland group meets for a monthly workday, as well as on many other occasions when more help is needed. This valuable volunteer work has helped the group to remove dilapidated stock fencing, upgrade old deer fencing, deal with deer on site, plan and run events, apply for and coordinate grants, dig ponds, create and maintain paths, maintain equipment and storage, communicate with the community, build new structures, install bike racks, clear bracken, plant and care for trees, and much more.



There is plenty more to do and new volunteers, including those with children, are always welcome to join us for a range of outdoor work and social experiences. Most of the group communicate through a popular private social media channel, which has helped us to maintain regular contact and conversations about the woodland and related matters. Many new social connections and friendships have been made.

The group continues with a dedicated steering group helping to keep the woodland developments on track. The giving of all personal time to this community project has been heart-warming and none of the above would have happened without all the volunteers. A huge thanks goes to everyone who has contributed.

James Reid



Insh Community Holdings ... our story so far

Insh village lies in the Cairngorm National Park between Kingussie and Aviemore. Our small village has looked after an area of grazings and forest on the edge of the village for many years. Trees were planted, paths, foot bridges and stiles were built. Things were going well. However, the land was leased from Forestry and Land Scotland and this limited what the community could do with the site.

We recognised that community ownership of the land would allow us to develop projects to support a sustainable environment with biodiversity a key issue. This would enable us to develop an amenity that local residents could contribute to. Issues around health and well-being were envisaged with community projects and work parties.

After discussions in the village about the future and with help from Voluntary Action in Badenoch and Strathspey our small charity was formed in 2020. Initially things gathered pace but with the COVID pandemic progress slowed down.



The trustees continued to work with the Scottish Land Fund and a business plan was drawn up with help from Duncan Bryden Associates. Earlier this year we took ownership of the land. The Scottish

Government's Scottish Land Fund has proved very helpful and allowed us to acquire a storage shed, tools and some maintenance equipment. ICH has over fifty members made up of village residents and some second home owners.



Two of our volunteers built us a log trailer and we have started to remove non native species of trees and this gives us a small income from firewood sales. Our latest work party involved over twenty members helping to move brush piles before a chipping machine could start work.

A volunteer maintenance team is looking after fences and gates and continuing to work on improving our drystone dykes. Four years ago the pylon line that ran at the back of the village was removed and buried underground. The area around this now has some natural regeneration of Scots pine. We also have an aim of preserving the crofting heritage of Insh and our grazings are currently let for a small flock of sheep.

We are in the process of long term planning and we hope to make progress with a tree planting programme. Wild flower meadows and wetland habitat are also being considered. Forest and land management plans are clearly not short term issues and careful planning will be essential.

Ewan Paterson



Applecross Community Company Torgarve Community Woodlands

It has been a busy period for Applecross Community Company and our [Community Woodland project](#) as the last six months have seen years of planning turning finally into action. When we last wrote an update for the CWA newsletter, we'd recently taken on ownership of a 14ha woodland site at the heart of our community, and had just received permission from Scottish Forestry to clear-fell an 8ha area of mature Sitka Spruce and Larch within that. We were excited about the project going ahead but slightly nervous about navigating various complexities on the site, as well as getting the timber out along windy single-track roads to the mills around 90 miles away.

So, we are relieved to report that so far, it's been a success. The timber is all stacked by the roadside, the significant archaeological sites within the woodlands (from iron-age round houses to an 18th C township) have all been fantastically protected by the felling team, and the power outages required to protect the SSE powerlines traversing the felling-area went smoothly. Our worst fears of a forwarder disappearing into the limestone caves beneath the woods haven't come true and although the rain started the day the harvesters and forwarders arrived and didn't stop, we were able to manage the worst of the muddy extraction route with brash from the site.



The summer and autumn have also been busy with community activities. Over 50 Applecross residents took part in a woodland party in Torgarve Woods on 31 July to celebrate

community ownership and say a fond farewell to the woods as we know them. Celebrations included guided walks focusing on archaeology, history and natural heritage, games, wonderful food and live music from local musicians. We were lucky to have Joanna from CWA join us and give a talk about community woodlands across Scotland more broadly.



We also organised a clear-fell "open day" where a member of the felling team gave a short talk about the felling and timber transport process and allowed a group of residents (mainly very excited primary school kids) a chance to get a close-up look of the harvesters in action.

Finally, we've been planning ahead and have started work towards our long-term ambition of meeting our forestry re-stock requirements as much as possible from seeds collected and grown on the peninsula. A group of community volunteers spent the day walking out and back to Airigh Drishraig, an old farm-steading half-way between Toscaig and Kishorn, to collect acorns from one of the peninsula's best Atlantic oak stands. We also had a family day collecting hazel nuts from the Carnach wood, which is adjacent to Torgarve Community Woodland, and one of the UK mainland's most westerly hazel woods.

Megan MacInnes, Local Development Officer, ACC

ldo@applecrosscommunitycompany.org



Kippen Community Woodland Group

Thanks to funding provided by the Falck Renewables Kingsburn Community Fund, which is administered by the Kippen Community Trust with support from Foundation Scotland, the Kippen Community Woodland Group has been able to replace some wooden bridges in Burnside Wood. Rather than replacing like with like, it was decided to culvert using plastic pipe and backfill with aggregate to minimise maintenance going forward. The funding enabled Stephen Paul Associates to be appointed to carry out the work on two bridges crossing burns, with additional labour provided by members of the Group and local residents enabling two bridges crossing ditches to also be replaced.



Black Brae Bridge removed

The work was successfully carried out on Saturday 17 April. The two wooden bridges over the burns were in a worse state than anticipated and disintegrated once removed, so it was just as well the work was done sooner rather than later. The paths and pipe crossings are looking really great, with the stone/turf facing ensuring that they blend in well. It has been great to get this important piece of work done with its long-lasting legacy improving the safety for people using the paths and reducing our maintenance commitments to these structures.

Thanks go to Bobby Wilson and to all those who volunteered their time to help with the work. It

was so nice to see some new participants and to welcome back those who haven't been able to make it along for a wee while. Thanks also to users of the wood for their patience and respecting the path closure signs, using the alternate routes.



Finishing touches to the path

If you would like to find out more about the work of the Group or receive details of our activities, just email kippenwoodlandgroup@gmail.com or find us on [Facebook](#).

Paula Watson, Secretary



Newtonhill Croft Trees versus Covid: One Woodland's Story

Newtonhill Croft is a small woodland near Wick in Caithness, established in 2010 under the WIAT scheme, and owned by Forestry and Land Scotland. The Friends of the woodland look after the community use of the site which has some 35,000 visits annually.



2019 at Newtonhill Croft Woodland had been a normal year, with Christmas tree sales doing well, the usual range of social events in our community cottage, including a memorable "Bothy Nichts", and 2020 started with the usual path repairs as wet spots showed up, some drainage, and plenty logs to be chopped. Even into February the volunteer project to raise the level of 100 metres of dog exercise loop trail by some 80mm with 10+ tonnes of gravel and top dressing was completed, and then the first public tree planting in mid-March went well with 400 TCV trees planted even if on two days of marginal weather. On 22nd March our consignment of 300 selected trees for our demonstration plot project arrived.

On 23rd March the Covid lockdown started!

All volunteering had to stop immediately. All car transport to the site, lying 1.5 mile from the town centre stopped. Some volunteers lived a 20 minute walk from the woodland, so an exercise walk or cycling there and a wee while planting trees became possible. One day each week this exercise became emptying the dog poo bins! This continued into April when the grass began to grow so now the few volunteers who could get

there had tree planting, dog bins and grass mowing to fit in. Of course with the site car park being out of bounds to dog walkers' vehicles the site was ideal for social distancing! You were one of the few people there for a mile or more around!! But our resident swallows did arrive in mid-April.

This unnatural state of affairs continued all though April and May, individuals/ couples keeping things going, including planting out our community vegetable garden, normally done by ranger-led groups. The rangers were on furlough. FLS, our landlords, were on furlough. Their contractors were not operating. Our weekly volunteer group of 10 plus folk could not happen. Our community cottage had all lets stopped. Our limited mission now, for those who could walk or cycle there, was to keep the woodland ticking over until lockdown eased a bit.

This continued until 30th May when one could at last drive to the site and two households could operate at a time. This allowed us to complete the outstanding tree planting. Thankfully another expected batch of trees didn't arrive!! We could also catch up on grass cutting, including the trail edges which were now encroaching on the paths. By mid-June volunteers from three households could operate on site. Mowing and strimming around the childrens' natural play equipment became possible. Scything of the longer grass started.

The site was also becoming busier, 14 cars in the re-opened car park in early July, mostly young families. Many stopped to say how the woodland had been a boon for their young children during the school closures. Then a rare sight for Caithness – a yellow brimstone butterfly was spotted. The dry sunny days, were interspersed with periods of heavy rain, but volunteering Tuesdays were up and running, although some volunteers decided not to come back. Pruning of the children's jungle trail and duck-boarding on



wet stretches got done at last. Some work on potholes in roadway, still suffering from winter conditions. The tatties lifted and veg in use from garden. Life was getting nearer to normal. Hedge pruning started by the approach road, and at last some tree maintenance. Oh how neglected they have been! But growth was sustained and our young forest, less than 10 years old was beginning to look like a woodland. Woodland birds included the first whitethroats and even a yellow-browed warbler. Nature was triumphing over Covid.

So 2020 was returning to normal, but no cottage usage permitted – we ate our lunches in the open shelter nearby, Christmas tree sales were called off to avoid close contact and protect our volunteers.

No FLS grass cutting of the wild flower meadow, so scythe work needed instead which took a while. I have never swung a scythe before on a frosty morning in November, but my gosh, the brittle grass stems fairly cut when it is like that! We had no lets income, although no outlay; but a

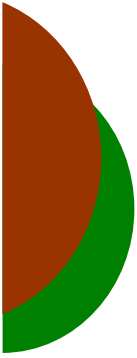
cryptic British Birds quiz, produced by a supporter, sold nearly 200 copies – in Covid times quizzes seemed even more popular than usual.

Then everyone knows the story of Christmas 2020, followed by a two and a half month lockdown in early January 2021. All volunteer work ceased until mid-March, all that was done was emptying dog bins and litter picks- daily exercise! We knew now how to cope with lockdown, and luckily in 2021 things got back to more normal routines more quickly and FLS were in operation sooner, although cottage letting – on a limited basis only – didn't restart until September. Our Christmas tree sales are planned to resume in December, albeit under very restricted Covid procedures – no social contact, no mulled wine and mince pies, no children's activities and no fund raising.

But the trees have continued to grow in 2021, and their value to the world is now a much appreciated fact!

William Bruce





CWA Membership

Voting membership of CWA is open to incorporated community woodlands groups: meaning any democratic, community-led organisation engaged in aspects of woodland management on their own or in partnership with others.

We have three membership categories for member groups: small, medium and large (based on turnover not woodland size,) with fees of £10, £30 and £50 respectively. Application forms are at:

www.communitywoods.org/join-cwa

Individuals who support the CWA aims and objectives may become **Individual** members (annual fee £10), and other organisations working to support community engagement with woodlands may become **Associate** members (annual fee £100).

CWA Members receive our regular e-newsletters & e-bulletins, access to our e-groups and invitations (usually subsidised) to our training and networking events, including our annual Conference.

CWA Staff & Directors

Jon Hollingdale, CEO

Jon represents the community woodland sector and offers forestry, development and governance advice to member groups.

Steading Cottage, Craigfield Farm, Kintessack, Forres, Moray IV36 2SP
Tel: 01309 674004

jon@communitywoods.org

Joanna Rodgers, Development Officer (p/t)

Joanna's role includes growing our membership, developing CWA communications & supporting our events.

c/o Steading Cottage, Craigfield Farm, Kintessack, Forres, Moray IV36 2SP

joanna@communitywoods.org

Piers Voysey, Senior Woodland Officer (p/t)

Piers provides in-depth community development and land management advice and assistance to community woodland groups and other CWA member organisations.

Piers@communitywoods.org

Heloise Le Moal, CWA Intern

Heloise is working with the Culduthel Woods Group and Glengarry Community Woodlands to help them develop new ways to promote their work and involve more people in their activities.

heloise@communitywoods.org

CWA Directors:

Anna Lawrence (Peebles) Chair
Tom Cooper (Glengarry)
Frank Corcoran (Isle of Cumbrae)
Syd House (Perthshire)
Alison MacLennan (Broadford)
Pam Noble (Kyle)
Ian Ross (Golspie)
Lorna Schofield (Knoydart)



Keep up to date with what's happening by following CWA on [Twitter \(@Communitywoods\)](https://twitter.com/Communitywoods) and keep liking us on Facebook at

www.facebook.com/Communitywoods

This is a great tool to publicise your work/events/course etc. for free!

Please send news & stories for the next e-newsletter to: admin@communitywoods.org